

JUF News, May 8, 2007

The U.S. House of Representatives, led by Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL), is urging five countries to speed up the opening of a secret Nazi archive that documents the lives and deaths of millions of World War II concentration camp inmates.

In a resolution passed with bipartisan support Wednesday, the House urged the international commission that controls access to the archives to ratify changes in a 1955 international agreement on the management of the files to make them public.

The U.S. Senate passed a similar resolution earlier this month.

Until recently the archives held in Bad Arolsen, Germany, had been kept in secrecy. The documents' importance became clearer in recent months after The Associated Press obtained extensive access to the material on condition that victims not be identified fully.

The Bad Arolsen archives contain 30 million to 50 million pages of documents that record the individual fates of more than 17 million victims of Nazi persecution, the resolution says.

The files have been used since the 1950s to help determine the fate of people who disappeared during the Third Reich and, later, to validate claims for compensation.

Rep. Kirk has pointed out that the information in these files will help rebut the Holocaust denial of Iranian President Ahmadinejad and other anti-Semites.